



The Task Force on Court Facilities
455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102-3660

Needs Analysis and Projection Committee
Meeting Report
March 24, 1999
Holiday Inn, Fresno CA

TASK FORCE ATTENDEES: COMMITTEE MEMBERS: PRESENT: Mr. Anthony Tyrrell, Chair Mr. Wylie A. Aitken Mr. John A. Clarke Ms. Yvonne Campos ABSENT: Hon. Joan B. Bechtel	PRESENTERS: Hon. Chris Chandler, Sutter County Superior Court Hon. William Pate, San Diego County Superior Court Mr. Garry Raley, Riverside County Superior Court Mr. Ruben Lopez, California State Association of Counties Mr. Anthony Williams, Administrative Office of the Courts TASK FORCE STAFF: Mr. Bruce Newman, Administrative Office of the Courts CONSULTANTS TO THE TASK FORCE: Mr. Andrew Cupples, Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall Mr. Cliff Woodard, Justice Planning Associates GUESTS: None
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I. DISCUSSION OF THE LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE LOCKYER-ISENBERG TRIAL COURT FUNDING ACT (AB233)

- 1) Ruben Lopez and Anthony Williams gave a brief presentation outlining some of the changes the legislature expected as a result of enactment of AB 233. They noted that court budgets and funding have become complex.
- 2) Mr. Lopez stressed that the plan put together by the Task Force must be very practical and clearly justify requirements in order to be "sellable" to the legislature. Empirical evidence and good sound arguments will be most valuable. For example, if something is presented that is believed to save money, historical evidence should be provided instead of anecdotal evidence.
- 3) Mr. Williams and Mr. Lopez made the following suggestions that the committee should consider when drafting documents that will be presented to the legislature:
 - a) Reviewing the ballot arguments for State Constitutional Amendment 4 (SCA 4) for core unification issues that interest the legislature noting that the legislature thought unification would cause efficiencies thus saving the state money.
 - b) Recognizing the need for varying court facility guidelines that allow court design to reflect unique conditions affecting each county.

- c) Being sensitive to changing the standard courtroom size specified in the Judicial Council's "California Trial Court Facilities Standards." If the standard size increases, the reasoning must be supportable and carefully documented.

II. PANEL DISCUSSION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SUPERIOR COURTS OF SAN DIEGO, RIVERSIDE AND SUTTER COUNTIES

- 1) Judge Chris Chandler, Judge William Pate and Mr. Garry Raley discussed their individual experiences with coordination and consolidation. Each of their counties had administratively consolidated their municipal and superior court operations prior to unification. The panel members expressed the importance of unification for improved efficiency and lower cost of court operations. They indicated that unification had a direct impact on reducing the need for additional judicial officers and enabling them to better absorb growth in caseload.
- 2) The three representatives believed they had already achieved the benefits of unification through consolidation before the municipal and superior courts formally merged. They noted that it is hard to quantify the precise impact of consolidation on staffing but noted that they expect little additional efficiency gains as a result of the counties' recent unification. Judge Chandler, representing a small county, said that their consolidation reduced costs by 17%. He noted that their facilities are not designed around their current operating procedures and have major problems; they are "a disaster waiting to happen." Judge Pate, representing a large county, agreed that unification offers some economic benefits but causes major problems with the court facilities.
- 3) Mr. Raley made the following observations and comments based upon his experiences in Riverside:
 - a) **Global Scale:**
 - (1) Impact of Creating Judgeships upon Court Facilities and Justice Systems.
 - (a) In Riverside, the use of the word "system" is a misnomer. Each "justice" agency has various revenue sources that are not related. Likewise, filing trends vary by economic and political factors.
 - (b) No direct relationship exists between judgeships and court facilities/justice systems. The best answer is to look at existing ratios on a large scale, adjust by any known factor, then identify "assumptions" based on an order of magnitude.
 - (2) Effect of Unification on Court Facilities/County Departments.
 - (a) Most of the additional judicial and staff efficiencies have been consumed by growth over the past few years. There are opportunities for continued benefits from unification that will vary county-by-county. The greatest direct benefit of unification has already been used by courts.
 - (b) Any measure used to quantify the effects of unification will need to capture historical information. Hopefully, be institutionalized and continuously be applied to future challenges.
 - (3) Administrative and Operational changes that can reduce or mitigate effects.
 - (a) Review and revise laws that are burdensome and/or unnecessary. (Examples: recitals of details by judges allow greater use of technology, etc.)
 - (b) Juror reform!
 - (c) Persist in making unification successful.
 - (d) Involve community input. They are the final test as to what is really a "need."
 - b) **Riverside Experiences:**
 - (1) Impact of unification in case distribution.
 - (a) This was HUGE in Riverside. Crosscourt filing and dispositions of multiple cases is a corner stone of unification.
 - (2) Response to growth by unification.
 - (a) The "equity" of judicial and staff time in the court was used to meet requirements of growth.
 - (3) Unification impact on organizational structures.

- (a) Each time a consolidation (combining two or more courts under one judge/administration leadership) was done, the organization was reviewed and updated. Representation of all functions and geographical areas is critical.
- (4) What actions/innovations to accommodate demand for increased services?
 - (a) Full use of bench officers; full use of support staff; implementation of access and efficiency opportunities. The test used is “ACES”: Increase Access, reduce Costs, increase Effectiveness, Staff development.
- (5) What does the future hold for unification?
 - (a) The concept of the “ACES” criteria in (4) above is now ingrained in the court.
 - (b) Structural changes have made the judicial functions long term.
 - (c) Success depends, in part, on progress for transition at the state level.